DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 065 UD 024 339

AUTHOR Prewitt Diaz, Joseph O.; Draguns, Juris G.
TITLE Mental Health of Two-Way Migrants: From Puerto Rico to the United States and Return.
PUB DATE 26 Jun 85
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Circum-Mediterranean Regional IACCP (International Association of Cross Cultural Psychology) Conference: "Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Research" (1st, Malmo, Sweden, June 26, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acculturation; Adjustment (to Environment); Biculturalism; *Culture Conflict; Family Role; Family Structure; *Mental Health; Migration Patterns; *Puerto Ricans; *Social Integration; *Stress Variables
IDENTIFIERS Puerto Rico; *Return Migration

ABSTRACT

The mental health needs of two-way migrants from Puerto Rico to the United States and back again are discussed in this paper. Four factors affecting Puerto Rican migrants are outlined. First, the relationship between migration and stress is considered. Often, it is noted, in migrating away from stressful economic conditions, the Puerto Rican encounters even more stressful cultural and social conditions. Second, the disruptive effect migration has on the family cycle is discussed in terms of changing family roles, exposure to different cultural behavior, separation of husband from the rest of the family, and the problem of "neo-ricans," United States born children of return migrants. Third, differences and difficulties in the expression of self, especially behavior and language expression, the focus on school adjustment and self-esteem and in cultural adjustment are considered. And finally, acculturation, and particularly how Americanization causes a greater emphasis away from family to personal achievements and orientations, are discussed. It is concluded that the impact of migration, integration, and acculturation on the mental health of the Puerto Rican migrant and return migrant needs to be systematically evaluated. (RDN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED259065

MENTAL HEALTH OF TWO-WAY MIGRANTS: FROM PUERTO RICO TO THE UNITED STATES AND RETURN \1

Joseph O. Prewitt Díaz
Associate Professor of Education

and

Juris G. Draguns
Professor of Psychology

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. O. Prewitt Diaz

Pennsylvania State U.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG 019 339

1. This paper was presented at The First Circum-Mediterranean Regional IACCP (International Association of Cross Cultural Psychology) Conference: "Ethnic Minority and Immigrant Research." Malmo, Sweden June 26, 1985

MENTAL HEALTH OF TWO WAY MIGRANTS: FROM PUERTO RICO TO THE UNITED STATES AND RETURN

Joseph O. Prewitt Díaz
Associate Professor of Education
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania U.S.A.

and

Juris G. Draguns
Professor of Psychology
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania U.S.A.

INTRODUCTION

Migration and mental health is a topic with a long history. Here in Scandinavia, Ødegaard (1932), a Norwegian psychiatrist, has been responsible for a number of classical contributions to the study of this topic. In particular, he formulated the question on the relationship of mental health states of individuals and their decision to migrate. Referring to Norwegian emigrants to the United States, he asked whether the stronger, the more adaptable individuals of their communities embark in migrating or, conversely, are these decisions the province of the malcontents, the deviants, and the abnormal? The resolution of this issue has been complicated by restrictive migration policies that screen out people with a known psychiatric histories as well as those whose behavior appears manifestly odd, bizarre, or innapropriate to the consular or immigration officials of the host country.

The focus has therefore shifted to the examination of culture shock, the trauma of having to adapt to a new cultural environment, and its psychiatric sequellae.

Against this background, very few unimpeded avenues of movement remain in today's world where a person can leave his or her culture of origin at will and can land in a new and different culture at will.

The island of Puerto Rico has been under United States sovereignty for 87 years. Yet it remains a setting whose language is Spanish, whose culture is Latin, and whose religion is predominantly Catholic. A Puerto Rican can at any time migrate to the continental United States and back, just for the price of an airplane ticket. Upon completion of a three and a half hour flight, they find themselves in a different world: culturally, linguistically, and economically. This transition taxes the available coping skills and demands adaptation.

This paper will discuss the mental health needs of the Puerto Rican migrants. The migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States mainland and the subsequent return of many to the island of Puerto Rico is one of the most interesting sociopsychological phenomena of tne second half of the twentieth century.

Puerto Rico, an island in the Caribbean, became a territory of the United States in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. In 1917, Puerto Ricans were granted American citizenship, thus allowing the free movement to the mainland United States. Although Puerto Rico is an American possesion it has its own government and educational system. The national language is Spanish and English is taught as a second language.

Although there was a colony of Puerto Ricans in New York since the latter part of the ninetenth century, mass migration to the mainland did not take place until the late 40's and early 50's. The port of entry for the influx of these Spanish Speaking American citizens was New York.

The migration of this population is different from previous migration waves to the United States in that: 1) Puerto Ricans are American citizens and therefore could travel to the mainland at will, 2) the migration of Puerto Ricans is the first airborne migration, 3) the island is only three and a half hours away from the East Coast airports (New York, New Jersey, Boston, and Philadelphia), 4) the Spanish language and the Puerto Rican culture has been kept alive in the United States because of the constant turn over of migrants.

According the the U.S. Census (1980) the population of the island of Puerto Rico was 3.4 million. The Planning Board of Puerto Rico (Junta de Planificación) (1983) reports that approximately 42% of the population has migrated to the mainland at least once. The 1984 Census update estimate that there are currently approximately 2.5 million first and second generation Puerto Ricans on the mainland United States. Although approximately 500,000 Puerto Ricans are reported to travel back and forth a year the net migration is estimated at between 20,000 to 54,000 (Junta de Planificación, 1982).

The native language of the people of Puerto Rico is Spanish and their cultural background is Hispano/African. This two factors have affected Puerto Ricans in the adjustment to the main-

land United States. The continuous growth of the population in the northeast and mid atlantic states make this group an important subject of study. The fact that these people are american citizens forces the receiving states to provide economic assistance, education and to satisfy the health and mental health needs of this population.

MIGRATION AND STRESS

Two theories have been advanced regarding the process of migration. Canino, Earley and Rogler (1980) emphasize that economic reasons are the cause for the migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States. Malzberg (1969) focused upon an emotional needs to "move on" as the motive for migration. He further suggested that there is a relationship between migration and mental health, particularly as it relates to the stress caused by daily living in a new environment.

No matter what the reason for migration, it is undeniable that it creates stress in the individual. Several factors might be considered as primary sources of stress. These factors include in the first place the movement into the lower steps of the social and economic ladder, contrary to prevailing misconception on the mainland, most of the migrants to the mainland are skilled laborers or had held technical positions in the island. The placement in the lower rung of the economic ladder is associated with psychological distress and somatic symptomatology. Frequently even for the well prepared professional there is a sense of "newness". The recent arrival does not find the network which is developed through years in a job. It takes some time to develop a working relationship with peers and achieving knowledge of the work place.

The study of stress and migration is very important in attempting to understand migration and mental health. Fernandez Pol (1980) and Garcia (1974) have described stress as an experience associated with at least five potentially relevant factors: presence of stressful environmental conditions; perception by the person that such conditions are stressful, ability of the person to cope or adapt to these conditions, genetic predisposition to disease, and the presence of disease agent.

Rogler (1983) suggested that changes in the social setting are characterized by lack of feedback to the individual regarding acceptable behavior in the new environment. The communication gap is a major source of stress. Rogler indicates that there are two types of social change which are usually associated with increased rates of certain types of mental illness; migration and geographical mobility.

Murphy (1965) and Rogler (1983) indicate that migration is seen as an esential stressful type of social change. Other factors which serve as stressors are the point of origin, destination, and the role of the migrant. The amount of pressure that the receiving society places on the migrant to assimilate serves

as an important stressor. A third stressor is the degree to which the receiving society is receptive to the arrival of migrants.

The case of Puerto Rican migration presents a complex problem in the study of stress. The Puerto Rican migrates to get away from stressful economic conditions, this step leads to other often more stressful cultural and social conditions. The expectation of the migrant toward the new environment, oftentimes results in added stress which might lead to illness (Rogler, 1983).

MIGRATION AND THE FAMILY

A second factor is that the act of migration creates disturbance in the family cycle (Fitzpatrick, 1964). The family, specifically the children are the last to learn that they will be leaving familiar surroundings for a strange environment. The family roles tend to change once migration takes place; parents no longer serve as role models for children in the new environment. Oftentimes there are conflicts between the home cultural behaviors and the in school cultural behavior (Prewitt-Diaz, 1982).

The Puerto Rican family finds itself in a depreciated position as a result of its language handicap, segregation, and color. Sometimes the male leaves the home so the female and her children are left to develop a new life in the new land. Beset by multiple problems, Puerto Rican mothers tend to become resigned to uncontrollable factors, a posture which makes them appear passive to the main culture (Zambrana, 1982). This overt behavior on the part of the mother tends to project an image of helplessness, which the child often interprets as the mother's need for help. In an effort to help his/her mother Puerto Rican children show low tolerance for tension, discharging it with burst of action which is often harmless, but may be dangerous, as in high incidence of crimes of passion.

Rivera Romero (1982) has outlined the factors in the development of mental health needs of Puerto Rican children and adolescents. He points out that the most important factors is the psycho-social development of the Puerto Rican returnee.

Rivera Romero reports that even if emigration was desirable for Puerto Rico because those who left found employment, the dream to return is always present. The family, which had been of the extended family type, changed to nuclear almost overnight. The nuclear family slowly began to desintegrate and the divorce rate rose to one for every three new marriages.

The fantasy of returning to Puerto Rico was passed on to the second-generation. This fantasy served the Puerto Rican on the mainland as a cushion for rebounding from "bad days." In their

children, it became an unconcious wedge that made it more difficult for youngsters to identify with the mainstream mainland (Rivera Romero, 1982). According to Rivera Romero, Puerto Rican youngsters on the mainland suffer a continuing ambivalence in their identity. This has created difficulties for them in making successful socio-cultural adaptation.

The return migrants, to Puerto Rico have brought with them children born in the United States. Robles,Martinez and Moscoso (1980) indicate that the return migrant have joined the ranks of the unemployed. The children of the return migrant find the "dream" does no longer exist. These children are caught in an identity crisis as well as reality problems.

The children of return migrants are called neo-ricans a short for new Puerto Ricans. This nick name is evidence of the feeling of the general population that this population is different from their parents. Robles, Martinez,and Moscoso (1980) report that children find themselves as foreigners in Puerto Rico. The children oftentimes do not speak Spanish. And, while many children resist the Puerto Rican heritage, they have no roots on the mainland. These identity crisis constitute a basic vulnerability to mental illness.

Rivera Romero (1982) suggest that while neo-rican do not consider themselves Puerto Ricans, they simultaneously experience anger resulting from the rejection and prejudice they were subjected to on the mainland as Puerto Ricans. Although born on the mainland, they were not allowed to be Americans,within the mainland sense of the term, when they moved to Puerto Rico, they realized that they were not Puerto Ricans. The children do not understand Puerto Rican values and customs, their expectations of returning are not met.

MIGRATION AND THE EXPRESSION OF SELF

A third factor which has influenced the adjustment of migrants and return migrants is the expression of self. The behaviors and language expression in both countries are different.

Seilhamer (1983) studied the physical (somatic), school, and social adjustment on a group of migrants, return migrants, and circulatory migrants. She attempted to determine which was the best predictor of reading achievement for non-migrant students, she found that the best predictor was the physical (somatic) adjustment. Circulatory migrants, those who have migrated back and forth several times, also reported physical adjustment as the best predictor of reading achievement. It seems that circulatory migrant students have learned to express somatic symptoms as well as non-migrant students. This behavior tends to elicit acceptance from the teachers and school personnel in Puerto Rico.

Seilhamer also concluded that migrants', that is students who had spent all their school life in the United States, school adjustment was the best predictor of reading achievement. For

the return migrant students, that is students who had attended school in Puerto Rico, went to the mainland schools and returned to Puerto Rico, school adjustment was also the best predictor of reading achievement. This study concluded that Puerto Rican migrant and return migrant students lacked the culturally shared "idiom of distress" signaling their problems, which in Puerto Rico involves somatization and affective display.

Colón Colón (1982) attempted to determine if there were differences among Puerto Rican return migrant and non-migrant students in self-esteem and cultural adjustment. Significant differences were found in self-esteem, where the migrant students scored lower than the non-migrant students. He also found that the best predictor of achievement was self-esteem.Colon Colon concluded that the differences found in relation to self-esteem may be caused by functions of the immediate situations in which the return migrant students find themselves upon their arrival to the Island.

Nogueras (1983) attempted to determine if there were any differences in the clinical scales of the MMPI (Puerto Rican Spanish translation) when administered to non-migrants, and return-migrant adolescents. Nogueras found that the migrant students scored significantly higher in the infrequency, hypochondriasis, and social introversion scales than the non migrant students. This results can be interpreted in one of two ways: the migrants performance is less impaired by stress than has been frequently supposed on the basis of naturalistic and impresionistic data or the MMPI was insensitive to the kind of stress that the return-migrants are experiencing. In either case, the response of return-migrants approximates that of the normal rather than the clinical sample in this study.

MIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION

A fourth factor which tends to affect the Puerto Rican migrant is acculturation (Berry, 1976, 1980; Bochner, 1982; Padilla, 1980). For the Puerto Rican acculturation implies a change in language, Latin-American culture and traditional values.

Malzberg (1969) reports that the process of "Americanization" of Puerto Ricans was causing a greater emphasis on personal achievement and a shift from family to personal orientations. Berry (1976) suggests that the process of acculturation will cause the person from the minority culture to adapt to the viewpoints of the majority culture. This has been accomplished with varying degree of success by many Puerto Ricans in the mainland United States. It has been a lot more difficult to accomplish for returning Puerto Ricans. They have attempted to change the traditional values of the island and their attemps typically meet with rejection.

The attempt to adapt to the mainland or the island, which ever the case may be, tend to create anxiety in the individual and in the family. Rogler (1983) reports that knowledge of

English, social literacy (awareness of basic facts about the environment), and years in the United States proved to be effective antedotes of anxiety in Puerto Ricans on the mainland. Robles et al. (1980) reports similar findings with Puerto Ricans who return to Puerto Rico after living in the United States for three years or more, i.e., in this case, it is Spanish proficiency, knowledge of the Puerto Rican social environment, and years of residence in Puerto Rico that predict lower anxiety.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the role that social structure and process play in influencing individual psychological functioning is at issue. The unique case of Puerto Rican migration has yielded valuable data on the vicissitudes of adaptation in changing environments. Therefore there is a need to systematically evaluate the impact of the process of migration, integration and acculturation on the mental health of the Puerto Rican migrant and return migrant.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Berry, J.W. (1976). Human Ecology and Cognitive Style. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Berry, J.W. (1980). Social and Cultural Change. In H.C. Triandis and R.W. Brislin (eds.). Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology. (Vol. 5). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Bochner, S. (1982). Cultures in Contact. New York: Pergamon Press.

Canino,I.A.,Earley,B.F., and Rogler, L.H. (1980).The Puerto Rican child in New York City: Stress and Mental Health. Monograph #4. Fordham University: Hispanic Research Center.

Colón Colón,J. (1982). An Investigation of the Effects of Migration on Self-Concept, Attitude toward Mathematics, and Achievement in Mathematics among Puerto Rican Return-Migrant Students and Puerto Rican Students who have never migrated. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University.

Fernández Pol, B. (1980). Culture and Psychopathology: A Study of Puerto Ricans. American Journal of Psychiatry,137, 724-726.

Fitzpatrick, J.P. (1976). The Puerto Rican Family. In C.H. Mindel and R.W. Habenstein (Eds.).Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variation. New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing, Co., Inc., pp. 192-217.

García, C.S. (1974). Estudio Epidemeológico de Salud Mental. In J. Rosello (Ed.) Psicopatología: Investigación Científica. España: Talleres de Industrias Gráficas Diario Día, pp. 88-103.

Junta de Planificación. (1982).Perfil Demográfico y Económico de la Población Immigrante en Puerto Rico. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Junta de Planificación de Puerto Rico.

Malzberg,B. (1969). Are Immigrants Psychologically Disturbed? In S. Plog and R. Edgerton (Eds.) Changing Perspectives in Mental Illness. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Murphy, H.B. (1965). Migration and the Major Mental Disorders: A Reapprisal. In M.B. Kantor (Ed.).Mobility and Mental Health. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.

NCPR (1983). Recent Trends in Puerto Rican Migration. Washington, D.C.: National Puerto Rican Coalition.

Nogueras, J.A. (1983). The Standarization of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) on a Selected Group of Migrant and Non-migrant Puerto Rican Students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University.

Ødegaard, Ø. (1932). Emigration and Insanity. Acta Psychiatrica Neurologica Scandinavia, Suppl. 5.

Padilla, A.M. (Ed.) (1980). Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some Findings. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc.

Prewitt Díaz, J.O. (1982). The Puerto Rican Migrant Student and the Home-School Conflict. El Sol, 26(1), 6-11.

Rivera Romero, E. (1982). The Puerto Rican Perspective. (Report of the Commision on Mental Health of Puerto Rico). San Juan: Departamento de Salud Mental de Puerto Rico.

Robles, R.R., Martínez, R., and Moscoso, M. (1980). A Study of Puerto Rican Return Migration: Impact on the Migrant and the Island. San Juan, Puerto Rico: School of Public Health, University of Puerto Rico.

Rogler, L.H. (1983). A Conceptual Framework for Mental Health Research on Hispanic Populations. Monograph #10. Fordham University: Hispanic Research Center.

Seilhamer, E.S. (1983). The Effects of Type of Migration on Reading Achievement in Spanish, Physical (Somatic) Adjustment, School Adjustment, and Social Adjustment on a Group of Puerto Rican Students. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University.

United States Census of Population. (1980). Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census.

Zambrana, R.E. (1982). Work, Family, and Health: Latina Women in Transition. Monograph #7. Fordham University: Hispanic Research Center.